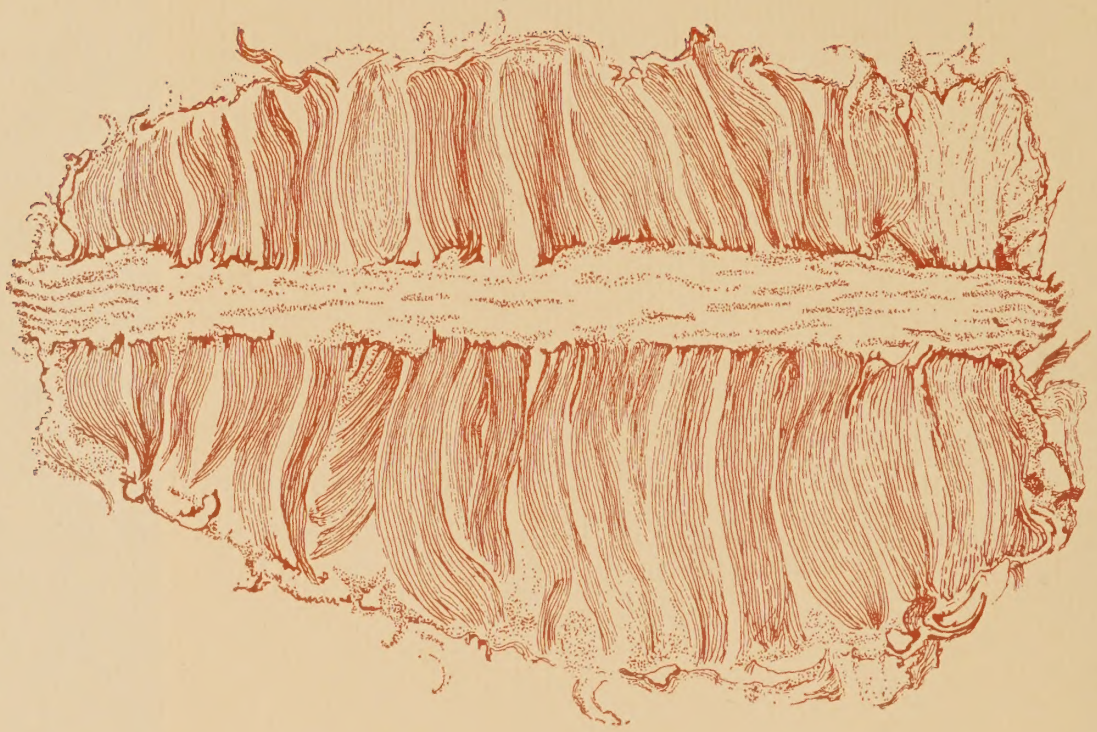
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
North Carolina Digital Heritage Center

https://archive.org/details/signetfall19681968quee

signet

FALL 1968

Signet is published twice during the academic calendar by the Observer Printing House, Charlotte, North Carolina. It is financed by the Student Government Association of Queens College and a grant from The North Carolina Arts Council, Raleigh. Address all correspondence to *Signet*, Queens College, Charlotte, North Carolina 28207.



Ursula Alexander/*EDITOR*

Edmund T. Weiant/*ADVISOR*

Carol Bishop/*ART EDITOR*

Denise Cross/*BUSINESS MANAGER*

Paxon McLean

Leslie Anne Davis

Rheta Lanehart

Becky Beck

Susan Porter

Judy Jones

Wendy Loughridge/*TYPIST*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROSE

Wild Grapes/*Paxon McLean/3*
Two/*Ursula Alexander/9*
The Letter/*Charles O. Hadley/21*
Davy Jones' Locker/*Paxon McLean/36*

POETRY

We're Only Women/*N. Matveeva translated by Maureen Horak Allan/4*
A Plea for Mr. Sexton/*Ursula Alexander/5*
Drifting/*Charley Carlock/6*
A Cardboard Majesty/*Charley Carlock/6*
Park in April/*Tilda Todd/7*
Collage/*Tilda Todd/7*
Wind Chime/*Tilda Todd/7*
Perspective/*Tilda Todd/7*
Sharing/*Tilda Todd/7*
The Sieve/*Tilda Todd/7*
Tell Us Plainly/*J. Daniel Zeluff/10*
First Year/*J. Daniel Zeluff/11*
Contrast/*Linda McPhail/12*
Relief/*Linda McPhail/13*
Incoming Tide/*Linda McPhail/13*
The Literacy Test?/*Mary Ann Hester/14*
Peace/*Mary Ann Hester/14*
I Left Them/*Jane Hoyme/15*
Nightfall (North Dakota)/*Jane Hoyme/15*
School/*Jane Hoyme/15*
I, II, III . . . You're Out!/*Paxon McLean/16*
A Day/*Kathy Mitchell/18*
Youth/*Kathy Mitchell/19*
When I Was King/*Kathy Mitchell/19*
Composite/*Becky Beck, Sally Stites, Ursula Alexander, Elizabeth Earle/26*
Sancho's Oath/*Rheta Lanehart/28*
Rocinante/*Rheta Lanehart/28*
Soy Lista/*Rheta Lanehart/29*
Clavileño/*Rheta Lanehart/29*
Desengaño/*Rheta Lanehart/29*
A Unicorn Song/*Ursula Alexander/30*
Transportation/*Ursula Alexander/31*
Tomorrow, etc./*Ursula Alexander/31*
Cape Song/*Ursula Alexander/31*
Culture's Birth/*Sally Stites/32*
The Crossing/*Sally Stites/32*
You/*Sally Stites/32*
Irony/*Sally Stites/32*
Brandywine Hundred—Chester County/*Leslie Anne Davis/33*
You, Lesley/*Leslie Anne Davis/33*
The Spent Dionysian Speaks To His Apollonian Friend
Who Answers/*Rheta Lanehart/34*
Popcorn/*Sherry McGeachy/39*
Commentary On American Philosophy/*Becky Beck/40*

ART

Cover/*Susan Merritt*
Cover Repeat/*Susan Merritt*
Carol Calloway/*2*
Carol Bishop/*8*
Susan Merritt/*12*
John D. McClanahan/*17*
Carol Calloway/*20*
Carol Bishop/*27*
Nancy Jane Grady/*30*
Carol Bishop/*35*
Cassie Shelly/*40*

Wild Grapes

by Paxon McLean

The wild grapes ripen in the thickets. The sun ambers them slowly as they hang in heavy clumps, laced through briars and live oaks. The island is two miles wide here, dotted with freshwater lakes, dark and still. Gaunt cypress trees sit on their haunches, poking their knees up through the brackish water. No sharp salt breeze stirs their limbs; no surf murmur penetrates the tangle of vines. Small birds scratch impudently in dust baths, hopping and twittering. They stretch their heads out, then draw them back and fluff their feathers until they look as if they have no necks. A thin black column of ants pours through pebble mountain canyons; winds in and out past sand grain boulders. A dead wasp blocks their path. They surround it, mount it, cover it with shiny living black. A scout races off, and before long other columns begin to converge on the spot. The ants pull and push, and the wasp gradually moves in jerks and pauses across the dusty sand, onto the leaf mold toward a swarming ant hole, and finally disappears.

"Joe! 're yew sure yew know whut yo'r doin'?"

"Course Oi do! Oi've bien comin' t' thies laeke Oi don't know **how** meny hears t' huent."

"Weil, **Oi** don't see no **laekes** yew wuz tawkin' 'bout, an' no oak tree, neither."

"Aw roight, Sam. Pieck upa rock an' throw iet just as far straight west as it'll go. Throw iet hoigh, or theim trees'll stop iet."

The smaller boy bends to pick up a fist-sized rock. He is about thirteen, dressed in jeans and a long-sleeved army jacket. His lace-up boots are thick and sturdy. His face is flushed with heat, and as he straightens up, he impatiently bends back a twig to make more throwing room. Splash! Joe grunts and nods, an "I told you so!" look in his eye. They force their way toward the invisible water, Joe in the lead. He, too, wears a long-sleeved jacket, jeans, and heavy boots. An army surplus machete hangs from his belt, and he keeps his hand on the hilt, pushing the sheathed blade behind him, out of the way.

"Watch iet, Sam! Oi nier stepped **ien** iet!" The trees and undergrowth extend to the very lip of the pond. Spanish moss festoons the cypress trees, a circle of hoary old men stooping around a tarnished mirror.

"Moi Goid!" Sam gives a low whistle as he surveys the silent water. "Thies here's 'bout th' spookiest place Oi've eh-ver seed!" They are subdued before the dark pool. "Oi feel loike theys eyes a closin' whien Oi look at 'em, but they opens agin whien Oi look th'other way."

Joe's harsh laugh rings false. "Yew scairt? Come oin, let's look for tracks." They make their way slowly around the pool, eyes bent on the ground. At the north end of the pond, they reach a sandy opening. Joe pauses to wipe his sweaty face, and Sam steps ahead. He bends down.

"Hey Joe! Oi think somebody's bien here afore! Look where they drug thies rope through the sand." A dry whirring rattle freezes him, with his fingertips just barely brushing the sand. Again the buzzing. He starts to straighten, back stiff with horror, then screams.

"Joe! Joe! It **gowt** me! Moi Goid! It **gowt** me!" A huge rattler whips back into his coil, not two feet away. Joe draws his machete with shaking fingers and slashes down, again and again. He turns to Sam, white-faced. "Where?" Sam has grabbed his leg just below the knee. "Iento th' calf. Iet's on foire!" Joe shudders and kicks the writhing snake away. "Loi down, Sam." He bends over his friend, who is trembling and crying over and over, "Moi Goid! He **gowt** me! My **Goid**! He **gowt** me!"

"Grit yo'r teeth, Sam." The machete rips through cloth, showing Sam's fast-swelling calf. "Oi gowt t' cut yew." Joe slips his rawhide bootlace through its eyelets and ties it above Sam's knee. He finds a wrist-thick piece of wood, and twists the lace tight with it. "Hold on t' thies, Sam—Oi'm goin' t' **cut** yew." Sam winces as Joe nicks him with the machete, just above the angry holes, and bends to suck the poison. He spits it out, and sucks again. Sam lies quietly, eyes rolled back. "Sam! Sam! Hold own! Oi'll be back—Oi'm goïn' for help!" He crashes off.

Sam lies alone in the sandy clearing. The heavy stillness of the thicket is leaden, pressing down into his guts. He raises his head and looks down at his leg. His lips quiver and his nose starts to run as he whimpers in fear and pain. He watches his blood ooze down slowly, drop by glistening drop, and sink into the grey sand. He begins to whisper in delirious terror. "Iet's drinking moi blood! Iet wawnts to kill me! Joe, help me, Joe, help me, iet's trying to **get** me!" His voice echoes over the dark water, and comes back in a mocking ". . . get me, me, me . . ." He begins to see strange shapes from the corners of his eyes—fantastic figures that stand and watch him in horrible glee, then slip away when he turns his head. His whisper rises to a shriek. **"Joe!** Moi Goid, **help** me!" Small birds rise in scattered flocks from the surrounding undergrowth, their wings beating a tattoo on the air so furiously it seems to lap his face in waves . . . He sinks again to the ground, and his last silence creeps to meet that of the implacable thicket.

The sun is slanting through the trees when the men break through. "Sam? Sam! Moi Goid! Look at th' ants!"

We're Only Women

We're only women—and so you say, "alas!"
And why "alas"? It's about time we touched on the reasons.
"Wine and women," that's just what you say.
But do you hear us saying: "candy and men"?

We distinguish you from khalvá and buns
We somehow feel that people aren't—hams.
Although to hear you talk the only distinction
Is that we never once put heads on our shoulders.

"Wine and women." Let's follow this thing out.
All you women, take in hand your cookbooks,
And say: Oh, I love you like strawberry jelly,
Like a fish head, just like a rabbit haunch.

But what? You mean my affection's not to your liking?
You're not a pie? Not cheese? You're a man? And I?

NOVELLA MATVEEVA
(translated by
Maureen Horak Allan)

A Plea For Mr. Sexton

Wisteria lay shadows on sun-flecked weathered boards.
"Mastuh? Mastuh, would you like a touch o' bourbon?"
The anguished groan-creak rhythms back and forth,
"No, James.
Wait! Yes, I'd like a drink."
Cars roar, meshing and unmeshing in metallic streams,
Glinting through weepy strands of limbs and leaves
And flower buds to arrogant pale eyes rocking.
He reaches for the amber drink.
"Them damn fools, James, they make me tired to see 'em
Hell-bent like that."
"Yes, Mastuh."
"Seems to me, they'd know better than to make such
Ruckus past this fine old part o' town."
"Yes, Mastuh. They's got no respect for folks."
Squeals of tires and laughter filter through
The shady lawn.
"It seems sometimes there's only me and you, James.
The rest are gone, you know, I'm glad
My Mary's gone, yes, really. It woulda'
Hurt her eyes and ears, that damn drive-in restaurant.
Defiles her memory almost. I'm right, James."
"Yes, Mastuh."
Shadows crawl on the veranda, a shawl is brought,
Bright neons start to blink.
"I'm goin' to my meetin', Mastuh. You'll be
Fine, now. I'll bring the lamp, another drink."
"All right, James. Now there's some change in the kitchen,
Take it along."
"Yessuh."
James shuffles through the dusky hall, takes off
The grey starched coat.
"Money in the kitchen, hell!"
The back door slams.

URSULA ALEXANDER

Poems by Charley Carlock

Drifting

The angry night sullenly sang its tomb-like aria to the ruffled
waves of the sea.
Standing, rocking in the foamy folds, her hair limp from the
moist night air;
flashing back silent pictures of a lifetime;
lapsing into forever . . . she sat in an hypnotic gaze.
The night then tapped its cold tears upon her back;
drawing her from the caverns of memories
into thoughts of reaching the nearest shore,
the bank of the Yocamoco.

A Cardboard Majesty

Remember when graying chains of cobblestones
walked beneath us in the cool wet of the night.
When cardboard kings we fashioned
and the scarlet cloaks they wore.
When dancing through our wells of happiness
We arose out of the blue depths of the dim light.

Forget—remember—forget

When only inky shadows of night walked at my side,
When one cardboard king was you,
And you were a delusion of a warped and lonely mind.

Tilda Todd

Park In April

I came to see the season's change
(I thought) in branches one time lean,
Now cherry opulence, stretching strange,
In newly skies bright splotched with green.

But curious crowds I hadn't thought
To think of also come and bring
Their neighbor's children who (yes ought
To leave the ducks alone), change spring.

Collage

A minute's pause in conversation made
Too many high-pitched cocktail voices seem
A rising whirl around the room—a scream
That scratched inside my throat. I was afraid
As on and on into the night I stayed,
Among the other straightened smiles my beam
Fit all too well—in just a fancy dream,
In only an over and over record-played.

"Just going to the kitchen for some air,"
I told the girdled guest who sang a shrill,
"But darling, you aren't leaving us? What for?"
The children's dinner dishes soaking there;
The potted violets in the window sill;
The dog that left his steak bone on the floor.

Wind Chime

From seven even threads above my eye
Small shapes in brass hang still and silent now.
The pigeon, rooster, wren, all crudely cut,
Are common ornaments, until at night
When from my room above the screened-in porch
I hear their magic tinkling caught on air.

Perspective

I guess I won't be seeing him again,
For now that I am here (where he was when)
I find things not the same as they were then.

Sharing

I will not thank you, for the way
You share your very self with me
Eludes what any words could say.
I will not thank you, for the way
We are as one could not long stay
If judged as a gratuity.
I will not thank you for the way
You share your very self with me.

The Seive

The day you left I (almost can't) recall
Your saying blandly we would both forget.
I think I screamed inside at that, and yet
You happened to be quite right after all.
The pain of any moment has to fall
Behind for other moments—so I let
It go and in the present time I met
I hardly noticed you not there at all.

But you've surprised yourself by standing here.
Are we as you remembered us to be—
With all the imperfections filtered through?
No, nothing now has changed, and in a year
Come back again—again I will be me,
And even when disguised by time, you're you.

Two
by Ursula Alexander

Eve crept silently into her secret place through a sparsely covered hole in the thicket's wall. The heavily laden berry bushes tangled their serpentine branches over and around the small square of loamy earth that had been her castle, her refuge, and her own since last summer. Narrow rods of sunlight filtered through an opening that was her peephole to oval patches of bright dirt. Smoothing away fat purple berries, she crouched on bare heels before the hole, nervously wrapping strands of hair around her fingers. She came here every afternoon, escaping the continual arguing and nagging at home to watch the boys fly kites. (At home, she sat on the worn gray sofa alternately watching the TV set and her parents' fights. She might as well have been another cushion, until schooltime, dinnertime or bedtime.) She came here, to her secret place where she felt omnipotent and real, and pretended to join the boys in their kite flying—especially Ralphie. Only Ralphie came every day, Ralphie who was the oldest and had the biggest and the best kite. Even when there was no wind, he often came to lie in the middle of the meadow stretched out on his back staring at the sky.

Today the wind was stiff and Eve had no sooner settled herself at the peephole, inhaling deeply the rich odor of overripe fruit, and surveying the green meadow below her, than she heard the boys' faint shouts in the distance. From her vantage point, she saw them stream over the smooth knoll, long tanned legs pumping furiously, and swaying from angular outstretched arms, six huge diamond-shaped kites, loud colors of the rainbow, trailing multi-ribboned streamers. With hardly a pause, and with six unified thrusts, they tossed the kites airborne. The flashiest of them all, of silver foil and bright red ribbon, Ralphie's, caught the air first with a violent tug, and with gull-like swoops, soared up to rip a cloud, then climbed still higher, thrashing wildly from side to side. Eve stretched a long spare arm, swelling with the pride of secret importance and flew the silver bird with Ralphie, tensing against its spirit and exuberance. While the other kites soon sailed up to float beside it, only his seemed so far away, so high and near the heavens, straining at the twine, as if to cut through the highest scudding cloud on to the sky's deepest blue.

When all the kites were up the boys sank down on their backs and regarded their creations, poised between the ground and sky, so high they were mere flecks against the blue-gray of the clouds. Eve too lay back and through an opening in the mottled leaves watched the glittering silver kite above her, its red ribboned tail swaying. She propped an ankle on one knee and her wrist on that to control the kite's steady flight. Anticipating its every movement, up or down, she could with a slight tug of her hand, make it pitch rhythmically, flipping its tail behind it. It floated higher and higher under her touch until she imagined that she sailed up there with it, her nose pressed to the clouds. Raising herself on one elbow, she peered out the peephole at Ralphie. His mouth yawned open in a laugh, the hand clutching the string lay carelessly on the grass. How overconfident he looked, how satisfied, and oblivious to the control she exerted over his kite. Clouding with rage, Eve leaned back and gave a vicious tug at her imaginary string. As she did the kite above dipped and planed down past its fellows toward a tree top. Executing hasty gymnastics in the air, it dropped and swooped still lower, and with one final hesitant waver, dipped and caught the ground.

Eve lay still for a moment, then leaped to her feet, her cropped head grazing the arched roof of the secret place. Tearing through bushes, she half ran, half fell down the slope to the bright sunny meadow where the boys stood, heads turned in disbelief toward the smashed kite. Ralphie still lay facing the sky which had carried his kite moments before, he had looked only long enough to see it plummet to the ground.

Eve lurched to a halt beside him, choking harshly, "Ralphie, I didn't mean it, I was so proud, I didn't!" He leaned up and looked at her uncomprehendingly, then at the other boys, and watched as she stumbled toward the spot where the kite lay and collapsed silently and desperately on the torn and battered silver paper.

Two Poems by J. Daniel Zeluff

Tell Us Plainly

Why are the footprints of God so
    Subtle while I deeply
Scar the earth with my spiked ego?
("I Work for a Living")

Why do the Mississippi stones still
    Scream,
While my God speaks in such a
    Squeaky whisper—or not at
    All? ("Outside Agitators")

Why must my theology be labored
    In endless rows of men's
Scrambled meditations while my
    Tired mind hums a longing for
Packaged thoughts and green Calvaries?
("It was good enough for the Hebrew children . . .")

Why is love never pastoral images of
    Picturesque grief—quaint lepers,
Shapely fallen women—but dirty
    Involvement with the stench of
Another's wounds? ("Damned Washington tee-pee's")

Why do my prayers bounce on paneled
    Walls, while even Gemini's spy out
The Heavens?
("Do you really want to be saved?")

First Year

Silly child—disgorged from
Family chrome,
Carrying boxes of high school
Successes,
Bigger unseen cartons of pebbled
Dreams, tied by twine waxed in
Affluent optimism.

Your face is creased with a
Cellophane smile hiding your
"God help me" thoughts, masking
Uncertainties,
Puttying over crevices of
Fear.

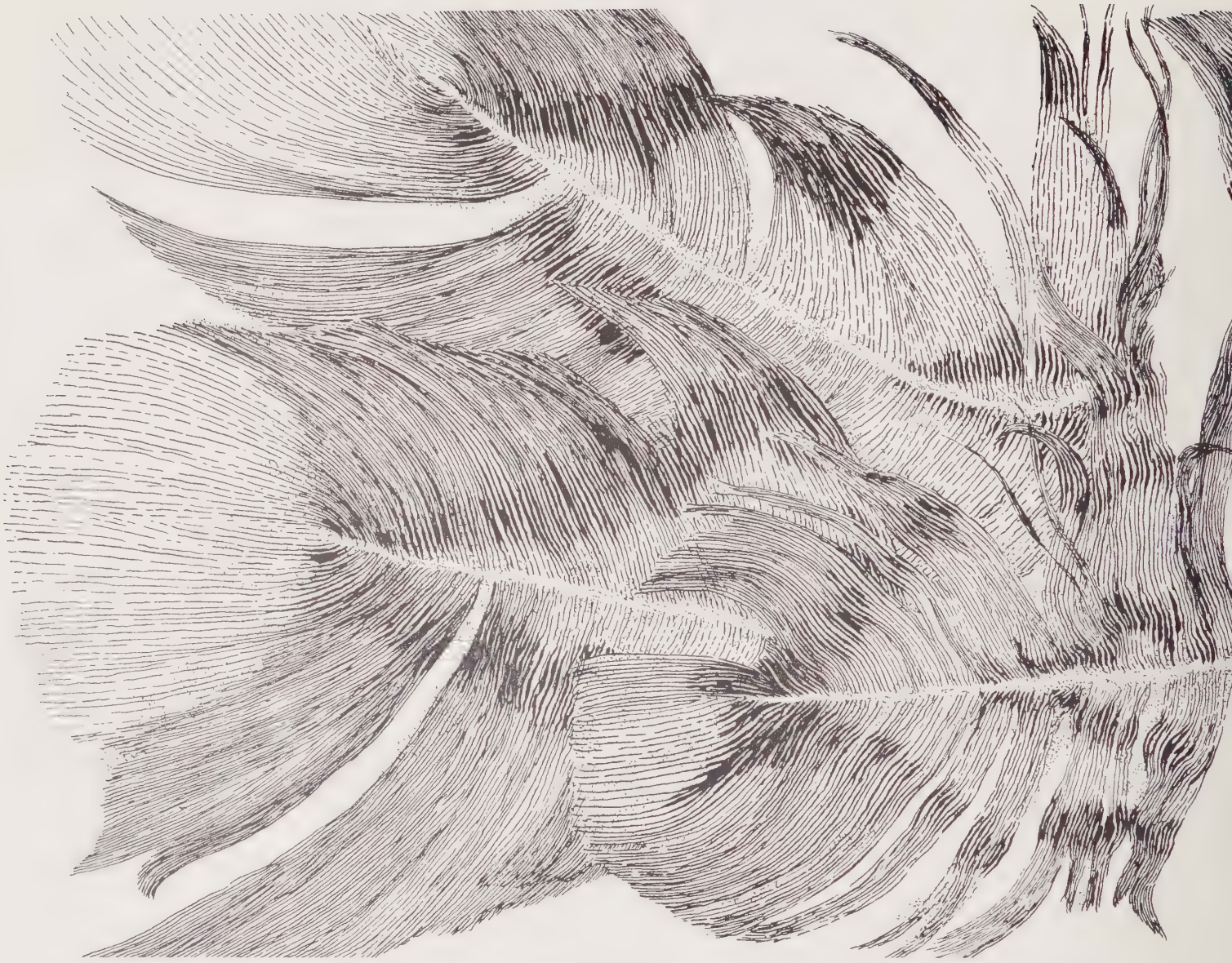
"Shuffle in Weejuns," "Villager
Voluptuousness,"
Aerosol puffs of acceptance
Flying that kite higher,
To fluff tongued-cheek words in clouds,
"I am pleasant, I am 'tough,'
You will like me" (God,
I'm afraid)

Your father still holds the
Door open—an afflicted joy,
Trying to buy yesterday's time—
He will never again doubt Methusulas'
Chronology—its existential.

When was that misty Brigadoon day,
Before the earth's crust
Cooled, before ice scraped our
Appalachians, Before Saber Toothed Tigers,
And Leake's man and fuzzy mammoths—
When you took his hand to steady your
One inch steps that walked the length
And breadth of creation.

Your mother stands in playtex
Properness (she can't jump
Barrels anymore), her Helena Rubenstein
Smudges displaced by echoes
Of emptiness. Her folded
Womb now waits upon her memories—
She watches this new birth, more
Painful than the first.

We too watch in epidemic anguish.
Are our red brick walls smoky kilns
That will dry and harden your innocence?
Will our arrogant degrees paper over
Your truth with ours?
Will our insecurities seep through the
Façade of our pomposity? Will you see us—
Or what they say we stand for?



Contrast

The sand dunes shift from year to year.
Old Charleston stays unchanged—almost.
Preserve the old! The people cheer.
The sand dunes shift from year to year.
Sand blows, shells break, things change, it's clear.
The sea alone is constant host.
The sand dunes shift from year to year.
Old Charleston stays unchanged—almost.

3 by Linda McPhail

Relief

Parched throats cough
Poison exhaust.
Palmetto leaves—motionless
At dead low tide.
Tourists stumble
Along steaming slate sidewalks.
Sunglasses slip from wet noses.
Cameras grow heavy.
High concrete walls
Reflecting hot sun suddenly end.
An open gate.
Shade—
A pink house covered with ivy.
A jade lizard
Glides up the mossy oak.
Mocking birds tip the hanging feeder
Spilling seeds
On velvet pansies below.
Stilted lemon daffodils,
Iris, purple tongues hanging,
Sway
In the fresh harbor breeze
As the tide shifts.
Miniature boxwoods, salmon colored azaleas
Encircle a rectangular goldfish pond.
Pink cotton candy geraniums
Scattered
In brown pots,
Windowsills, and porch steps.
Waxy ivy covering garden walls gleams.
Sunlight filters through Spanish Moss.
Shade—
Away from the sweltering street,
Noisy cars and polluted air.

Incoming Tide

Oysters snap, pop,
Shooting tiny spurts.
Pluff mud sucks
At slender marsh reeds.
Red, purple, fiddler crabs
Scratch along the bank's edge
Scurrying for cover.
Salt water oozes
Among chartreuse rushes
Seeping into stone crab holes.
Grey brown reeds float
In salt foam bubbles.
Scrawny black feet clutch
The tops of marsh grass.
A red-winged blackbird
Warbles,
Sways,
And is answered.
Mullet, spot and shrimp
Splash—
Smacking the water.
Seagulls shriek,
Swoop,
Skim,
Plunging into the creek.
Jagged oyster patches
Crackle as the tide covers them.
Sloping mud banks—
Near the water
Shining
Porous as a sponge,
Hard-baked, cracked
Near the rushes—
Disappear.
Dark green cloudy water
Ripples and whirls,
Streaming steadily
Pours into the creek,
Seeps onto the marshland,
Floating the parched reeds.

The Literacy Test?

English teachers supposedly pick only the best,
But the climax is always the same—a test;
Sometimes I wonder how they read and select
Well-worn classics for us to dissect.

Silas Martyr was betrayed by a cruel false friend,
Poor George Eliot was shot down by a pen;
Charles Dickens was the one who uncovered the plot
A Mary she was—a George she was not.

Next *Dour Town* was a fairly good play,
Till home to the Lit books it came to stay;
I'm glad our town is somewhat milder
But then we weren't founded by Thornton Wilder.

Sometime later when *The Moon Fell Down,*
It was quite a blow to a small foreign town;
Full of foreshadowing, irony and fate
But we never learn till it's too late.

A Wail of Two Cities was our next mournful cry,
As Sidney went bravely toward the gallows to die;
A doctor, his daughter, and a reformed sot
All added confusion to a well-woven plot.

Macdeath, along with his kind, sweet wife,
Realized his ambition and became king for life;
Unfortunately this did not last for long
Where was it that he went wrong?

The Fannyberry Tales made Chaucer the Father of Lit,
With his witty sarcasm and sarcastic wit;
Chaucer's tales were filled with candor—
Today he would probably be sued for slander.

Our English department is the best in the state,
But Dickens I despise and Eliot I hate;
Why can't we read something funny and light?
Catch Her in the Rye might be just right!

Mary Ann Hester

Peace

will not exist in the people
until it comes to the person

when a few peaces get together
the whole puzzle might fit again.

Jane Hoyme

I Left Them

It's because I never knew
I was leaving all I left,
That I want to slow the stream
Of the present into past.

Pale blue
The old room—
Where at night the slatted, white
Car-lights roved along one wall,
Down another, and away.
Then came
A grave sleep.

Morning's early light and green
Shadows stretched from cottonwoods—
Chilled cream
And red straw—
Berries, in the shade we ate.

On a coulee bridge we'd claimed
Near the slanted olive trees
We talked,
Slowly walked,
Never faltering a step.

I left them all unknowingly—
Oh, and now there's more to leave.
If on this journey we could see
Our footings give, and never grieve!

Nightfall (North Dakota)

I hear the very quiet of the plain.
As night is falling, over fields I see
Two elevators and a blackened tree,
And light that's glowing off a windowpane.
The stiff and level fields of ocher grain
Stand still, although there's breeze to send a bee
From the wild roses growing close to me.
A meadowlark has sung her last refrain.
The night comes nearer now, and far away
The sun is slinking down the sky, and through
A tree—it waits suspended—then is gone.
The fields get darker, darker, in relay,
And now there's nothing more for me to do
But start for home, and pull my sweater on.

School

The bell of our old school had rung with gust,
And we came catapulting out, from hall
And stairs that reeked of cleaning oil and dust.

To play near sun and wind and oak-root sprawl.
"Me first!" a voice from a dodging, leap-frog throng
Rang through the air—*"Watch out!"* A bantering call

Came clear and shrill: *"Miss Schanke, Miss Schanke, the long-Legged donkey!"* She heard, and turned from the rope-jumping girls
Who tittered, to catch a see-sawing third-grader song:

"Buster Brown, let me down!" Amy's curls
Glistened as she squinted back to say,
"What'll you give me?" A pony, white as pearls,

A feather, and seven cat's-eyes, he promised to pay.

We always took forever walking home
From school. We'd track the railroads on our way.

Past warehouse smells—potatoes, dankest loam—
Down alleys, past Mrs. O'Brian's lilac tree,
Taking a lavender one, or two, for Mom

Who'd ask us, *"What did you learn, and what did you see
In school today?"* before we'd slip away
With apples, roller skates, and looks of glee.

I, II, III . . . . You're Out!

I. Why are you trembling my dear, my dear?
Just take a bite, and have no fear.
How think you I keep my eyes so clear,
My scales so bright? Come now, draw near!

II. Your scales are very bright, 'tis true . . .
The fruit you offer, a lovely hue.
But would I this bite forever rue?
Forbidden trees are here so few.

III. Ah, now you've done it, you silly bitch!
And now we're banished to lane and ditch;
In pleasure poor, in sorrow rich
And all because of your willful itch.

(Hearken now, to this tale of woe.
If from the garden you would go,
Just heed the serpent's smooth-tongued flow.)

PAXON McLEAN

Three Poems by Kathy

A Day

It comes on clouds of mist and rays of sun.
It comes alone with dignity and grace.
It comes from nowhere—out of solemn space
In silence with no mention of what it's done.

Suddenly a change comes when the peaceful morning,
That proudly flying on the wings of light,
Rushes from the quiet chant of night,
Hurries to meet all sunshine without warning.

It is the day which comes in such a run
That starts so quiet and then becomes so fast.
It seems as if it always intends to last
Until some shadows cover up the sun.

The night calls gently to the grieving day
When it comes back again to shroud the earth.
It comes alone, to quiet giving birth,
While light goes to a secret hideaway.

Night comes at the end of day when shadows bend
And hide the day which flew on wings of light.
Behind the darkness of this graceful night
The sequence makes beginning from its end.

Mitchell

Youth

The days of winter seem to cry aloud
From lacking warmth when day turns into night.
The sky echoes the thought with passing cloud
By shutting off the path of each day's light.
The surge of heated anguish comes in tune
Where melodies of years all try to blend
The quivering trills that stop and then resume
To a symphony which plays up to its end.
Another warmth is in the fire of hearts.
They search for apt expression of their care
With flames of passion soaring. Something parts
When ashes stay where time has won its dare,
  When it goes out defeated to its death.
  But youth is ours up to its final breath.

When I Was King

I remember raking autumn leaves into a pile.
For pay we got to fire the grill
And melt fresh marshmallows from white to brown.
We lay on the grass,
And counted green fireflies.
We made a game of it sometimes.
And not to brag, but I won, always,
'Cause I made up the rules.

On early summer nights when school was in
We played alley hide-and-seek.
We played with all the kids.
Everyone could play,
Even if you couldn't climb on Mr. Goodlet's garage.
But you had to learn to never make a sound.
'Cause you'd be found if you did.

And if it rained on a summer night,
The porch was the place to go.
From there a kid could rule the whole, entire, wide world.
You could order the rain to cover the grass
And make the light shine on it.
But I could make it stop,
And leave the new smell it does
As it trickles off the gutters.

I wish that I could still do that.
I can melt marshmallows and count fireflies.
But I don't care if they're green anymore.
I can't climb on the garage,
And I can't rule the world from my front porch swing,
But I can stay quiet.

Now's the time I sit inside the house,
The way my parents did, when I was king.

The Letter

by

Charles O. Hadley

I give you the end of a golden string
Only wind it into a ball
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.
—William Blake's **Jerusalem**

As it had happened for the other six nights, deep sleep simply would not come. Only this time it was more than just a clanging buoy, a stray gull in the thatch, or the restless wind that kept me tossing nervously at the fuzzy edge of sleep. By the light of the oil lantern I could see the dust and pieces of thatch from the roof scatter as I heaved back the weight of heavy wool quilts and climbed out of bed. The bitter July cold made me reach for the heavy wool sweater even before I groped for my glasses. Old Shevaun had knitted the sweater years ago for a young boy, and the bawneen with the double zigzag pattern felt instantly warm and comforting. Unthinking, I rummaged in the drawer for my wrist watch.

It had been amusing the day I reached the island. No finery in clothing, shoes or bags had jarred the natives' critical eyes, for I had been careful to leave on the mainland anything even faintly frivolous. I had thought of everything. Then the ancient and wise Michael, who had been examining me silently for a few minutes, took my wrist, examined my wrist watch in mock seriousness, and said: "When God made time, he made lots of it for us here. You won't be needing such machinery for awhile." I tossed the only timepiece on Inishmore Island back into the drawer.

Timelessness had been a pleasure these seven days. The sun across the kitchen threshold always spoke the hour if one insisted on knowing. But during the long sleepless nights there was no such indicator and somehow I ached to know the hour. I had watched the sun finally rest around eleven, and knowing that it would rise again around three, calculated the approximate hour. For some reason it gave me temporary relief. Then as I was about to close the drawer, my eyes fell on the other thing. I wanted to slam the drawer shut on what had turned so much pleasure into pain. If only I dared to snatch it up, tear it to pieces and let the raging wind and sea outside carry it out of our lives. Then perhaps sleep would come. But there it was, and I knew what I had to do with it—tomorrow.

It would have been much easier to have done it on the day of my arrival, for I was really too exhausted to let good judgment check me. English trains and coaches had warped my patience, and

the trip across the rocky Irish sea and the subsequent journey across Ireland completed the shattering of my spirits. The rickety bus out of Dublin westward through Kildare and Tipperary to the coast and Galway took all day as it labored leisurely at three miles per hour through villages, gypsy caravans whose teams of horses and donkeys clogged the road, through bustling cattle markets jammed with carts full of squealing pigs and calves, and through the musty peat bogs where frequently a wheel mired down in the soft, chocolate turf so precious to the Irish for fuel. After an eternity there was Galway at last and a welcome night's rest before the next and final lap toward my destination.

Next day I boarded the tiny steamer, the only link between the primitive islands thirty miles out Galway Bay which, according to tradition, was the last land Columbus saw before he discovered America. Once on board, I had stepped back in time to another century. There were high-heeled tourists from Killarney, horses from Connemara, and actresses from the Abbey Theatre on their way over to refresh their Gaelic. I listened as fascinatedly as a child to the peddler, the islander's traveling store, readying his bewitching suitcases of trinkets, dishes and colored thread. All this in addition to a handful of Spanish students, three Galway cows, and about thirty-five pigs running loose on main deck added up to an intriguing goulash of people and livestock that prompted the old captain to yearn for the days he spent on a minesweeper during the war. Then there was myself. The call to visit this primitive part of Europe of Synge's **Riders to the Sea** had always been strong. Yet I had still another purpose in coming; and try though I might, I could not for a moment forget it.

For three hours the little steamer plunged directly west through the choppy sea until it reached the point where the encircling arms of the mainland come close, with the savage cliffs of County Clare to the east and the ravishingly beautiful mountains of Connemara to the north. There, at last, I saw in the distance the Arans rising up before me like three gray whales basking on a crinkled sea.

Today was boat day, the major event of the week, and all other activities on the island were eclipsed. The arrival of the steamer meant many things to the islanders: the wheel of a farmer's two-wheeled cart sent to Galway for repair since there is no wood on the islands; the Gaelic newspaper which gets read forward and backward for at least a week; a new red petticoat for Herself; or a brimming keg of Irish poteen from a relative in Kilkenny.

Since early morning the islanders had been peering from their rocky heights or standing on the stone walls eagerly scanning the far horizon for the first wisp of smoke. Now they were lined up on the pier at Kilronnan, the men dressed in their crude, handknitted sweaters, patched homespun and raw leather shoes, and the women wearing heavy black shawls that fell down in long points over their gaily colored skirts. As the steamer pulled slowly into dock, I scanned the group in search of an elderly couple. They were expecting me, but not what I had brought them.

Perhaps it was the shock of meeting the old couple for the first time. I was not surprised to find the woman small and soft-faced, wearing a knot of unruly white hair at the back of her head and the old man small and wiry with fiery eyes set deeply in an elfin face; but I had not imagined the inroads that time and weather had made on their faces. Then again, perhaps it was the shock of the rough ride home over the rocky cliffsides in the two-wheeled trap. In order to get us home more quickly, old Michael had with his hands torn down portions of rock fences, driven the donkey through, and rebuilt them again behind us. Or perhaps it was simply the effect of the furious wind which tore at our clothing like a raging boreen or the sea below that boiled up the cliffside like wild white horses. What right had I to add to the suffering that nature had heaped upon these people through all the years? In any case, I had not taken advantage of the moment that would have been easiest for me, nor had the old coupled posed the question I most dreaded: Had I received their letter with the address? Had I gone there? Their old eyes searched mine for the answer they burned to know, but something told them not to ask.

From the moment I stepped over the threshold of the cottage, I "belonged"—so far as the other islanders were concerned — to old Shevaun and Michael O'Herlihy. According to custom, no other family would ever take me into their home as a lodger unless "mine" had no room or requested it. Nor would I have had it otherwise, for through an extended correspondence prior to my visit I had formed a deep affection for the old couple. It seemed that little about their lives remained to be explained—they had written lengthily and intimately about their joys and their sorrows. Nearly every object within the crude stone walls seemed like something out of my own past. There was the cozy kitchen, the center of island life, just as I had imagined it with its two doors facing each other—one closed against the wind. Then there was the old meal chest, the open cupboard of white pitchers and dishes, the crude bench which served as an overflow guest bed, and last, the very soul of the house itself, the fireplace. Inside the wide opening were hob seats where generations had sat nursing their babies through the long nights of croup and fever. Suspended from cranes over the turf coals were numerous pots bubbling with fish or carrigean moss and a kettle of water always hot and in readiness for a hospitable "cup o' tay." On the hearth in front, there was the three-legged iron pot in which old Shevaun made the dark, fragrant soda bread, and finally, over the mantle, the mildewed portraits, cheaply tinted and fading, of two young boys. The picture as I had imagined it was now complete.

The first evening on the island set the pattern for the remainder of the time. My first test was the food. I tried hard to like the perpetual diet that has sustained the islanders for centuries, although the potatoes were always boiled and mealy, the cabbage flat, the fish strong, and the seaweed bizarre. Watching the younger fishermen, clothed in goatskins, descending to the ocean's edge after a violent storm and bringing up pile after pile of the slimy seaweed gave me a new appreciation for this staple food, if no greater liking for the taste of it. After the evening meal came that magic moment when the scraps had been scraped up for the livestock and the table cleared and garnished with old Shevaun's finest linen cloth. That was the signal for Michael to move the shark oil lantern from the table to the window, and that in turn was the signal the neighbors had been watching for. Within a few minutes, every old and young islander who lived within sight of the lantern began to file silently in to pay a respectful call on the new Yank visitor whose hand they shook firmly once in the European manner. Their shy eyes met mine only briefly before they quietly retired to their parts of the room, the women and the auburn haired girls on one side, and the men and the lean, curly-haired boys on the opposite. If the mood of the evening was for dancing, the crude stone floor glimmered with a fresh, slippery coat of candle-wax. Here everyone sat with modest, downcast eyes watching their reflections until the neighborhood fiddler had taken his place by the light of the flickering hearth and drawn the first rasping bow. All at once, the tiny cottage came alive as the men and the girls dashed for each other simultaneously. No one was spared, nor was there any respect shown for age. As the jigs grew faster and louder and the poteen began to flow, the party gained a momentum that didn't diminish until well after sunrise at three thirty. But nobody complained, for there was no one—only the frightened cow and her calf in the adjoining room and the unremitting sea and wind outside which seemed to resent even this feeble encroachment on their domain.

One evening the mood of the visitors was for singing, and the gathering turned into a songfest which old Michael called "the sweetest sing-song under the cope of heaven." With a bit of coaxing, Charlie O'Flaherty, the only neighbor on Inishmore who could carry a decent tune and intone it loudly in revival fashion, was persuaded to take the fiddler's stool and lead the group in song. Once again the poteen flowed, and soon an incredible mish-mash of voices was joining in the choruses. But the evening was not meant to be gay. The haunting, minor-keyed Gaelic songs called up too many memories of sorrow. In any case the dawn came up on a strange sight. Out of the cottage filed a baleful looking group with tear-stained cheeks and red eyes, weeping yet immensely happy over having spent, as they called it, "a glorious evening 'mongst the stars."

And the days—seven glorious ones—were no less memorable. It seemed that God had indeed made time just for them. In the sparkle of early morning while old Shevaun cleared breakfast from the table, the old man with the elfin face took me down the cliff to the sea to wave the shark fishermen off in their primitive currachs, the same crude, handmade boats that Caesar saw in Britain's waters. And in the glow of mid-morning we strolled along the island talking with the natives hard at work clipping sheep, working their rug-sized patches of seaweed soil, or piling loose blocks of stone into a jigsaw puzzle of walls that crisscrossed the island as protection for the cattle and soil against the fierce, roaring winds. "Help thy neighbor" seemed to be the rule of conduct. The weaver and the farmer thought nothing of leaving their work to help the fisherman launch his currach, and the fisherman in turn would leave his nets to help the farmer push his struggling cow into the water to be towed out to the steamer for sale in Galway. But no one was too busy for a friendly chat or an invitation inside for a cup of tea. For time was the one commodity they had plenty of.

In the lazy coolness of these late afternoons, we made our way along the windy cliffside and watched the islanders hunt for rock-bird eggs. It was breath-taking to see the men swing out and over the cliffs on thin ropes in an attempt to reach with their toes ledges where the birds lay their eggs. Then, against the rising evening wind, we pushed back home, pausing to speak to the cottagers in their doorways making the most of daylight weaving baskets or brightly colored wool for belts and flailing grain against a convenient stone. We spoke to the women on their way to the field to milk the cow or to the spring to get water for next morning's tea, and to the children whose laughter rang like seagulls as they balanced on top of the stone walls. The long gold and purple evening was filled with the music of soft Gaelic and the eternal crash of high waves charging the shore. Those warm moments around the fire in the late afternoon beside the old woman with the knot of unruly white hair and the old man with the elfin face were precious. Their simple faith, their goodness, and a wisdom learned through suffering taught me much about many things.

Thus had passed seven unforgetable days. In our immense solitude, nothing had been able to touch us but the weather. And even that had been kind.

Much too soon came the eve of my departure. All afternoon old Shevaun unashamedly wept and blew her nose loudly as she shuffled busily in front of the hearth over which pots of special dishes were bubbling furiously as the wind harassed the turf coals. Old Michael sat in the doorway with an eye on the "oyster-shell sky" urging her to hurry the food along before the squall broke. Despite the special potato cake, the creamy colcannon and even the elderflower wine and butter sent over by currach from a cousin on a neighboring island, the last gathering at the table was not a joyous occasion. After the silent meal, the lantern-signal was again placed in the window. And in a little while old Shevaun broke the silence with: "You know you are our only contact in America. Do you suppose there is the faintest possibility . . ." She never finished the sentence, for the eager neighbors had begun to arrive bringing handwoven baskets, bawneen, and St. Bridget crosses as presents for the departing guests. After a simple and touching little farewell ceremony, I was placed on a hob seat inside the hearth, and the island's favorite spinner of tales sat down by the fire to entertain us. For three hours the guests sat spellbound as they heard again of the great courage and chivalry of Ireland's ancient heroes: of the sons of Unnach and Cuchullin or Maeve, and of the Fianna. Then as the tales swung into English for the benefit of the guest and turned toward accounts of the mermaids on the cliffs, the red-capped wee folk and the evil spirits and ghosts in the boreen, the islanders gradually gathered closer and closer, partially in an effort to keep warm by the fire, partially in attempt to hear better over the rising noise of the wind, but mostly for company, for there was scarcely one among them who didn't believe in the supernatural.

Outside the rain had begun to fall and the wind was driving it in gusts against the cottage. In a moment a small chunk of baked peat plaster fell to the stone floor revealing a bare area of thatch soaked through by the rain. I looked up from gazing at the coals to see the old woman with the knot of unruly white hair sitting alone in the

shadowy corner, her eyes resting sadly on the mildewed portraits of the two sons. Gaelic heroes held no interest for her. Was she thinking of a little tow-headed boy? Perhaps it was the time he lost the new calf out of the currach on the way from the market and rode to shore on its back. Or maybe it was the time as a young man he proudly announced to his parents that old Flynn had offered six head of goats as his daughter's dowry. No one would ever know how much he had loved that girl with the auburn hair nor how much the old couple had looked to her to carry on the O'Herlihy line.

Then the wrinkles around the old woman's eyes would deepen. Was she recalling that bitter day when she and the neighbor women, shrouded in black woolen shawls, made their way together in the wind down the rocky path of the cliff to the sea's edge? There as the men stood dripping and ghostly silent, she had leaned over an unrecognizable body of a drowned man to examine the weave in the handwoven bawneen sweater. It was unmistakably the double zigzag. Not until then was the customarily warm fire place allowed to grow cold. Along with the ashes of the ever-smouldering peat, the old couple buried all their hopes, for they were no longer young.

Aging, embittered, childless, the couple conceded to their master, the sea. For years they took from it only enough for their simple needs, while its insatiable waves smothered their pitiful crops and soil with spray. And while they blessed the sea for giving them kelp and long sea rods to exchange for Galway peat, they silently cursed it over and over again for killing their only son.

Then the miracle occurred. Never in all history, according to their simple minds, had prayer been so miraculously answered—never at least since the time of Sarah and Abraham. The Lord, in all His merciful kindness had seen fit to bless them with another son. If there was a soul on the islands who did not look upon this as an outright miracle, no one ever said so. As the years passed, the baby grew into an extraordinary boy child, and the boy child into a man the like of which hadn't been seen in western Ireland since the time of Fianna. There wasn't a man on the islands who could turn out a finer basket, thatch a neater roof, or flail a cleaner bit of grain than he. No one had learned his letters and numbers faster and certainly none could speak a softer Gaelic. Young Martin had brought back to them the will to live, and his strong arms provided the means. None could carry a heavier load of fish or bring back more delicate rock-bird eggs than he. Who else on the island dared to dangle precariously between sky and sea in search of a secure enough ledge where he could stay all night? On such occasions old Shevaun grew ancient with worry and sat by the open door of the cottage until daylight listening for a cry for help. In the morning the proud father would haul the young son up and surprise the neighbors with a net full of birds caught asleep in their nests. But the old woman with the knot of unruly white hair never touched one, nor was she ever able to eat a single fish brought back after a perilous day in shark-infested waters in the canoe-like currach that tipped over if one's hair, as they say, is not parted exactly in the middle. "Young Martin knows how to keep his tongue straight in his head," said Michael, scolding his wife for her skittishness. Because of these moments of gray worry, old Shevaun was especially thankful for those quieter moments when Martin was content to spend the afternoon sitting with his father on the cliffs high over the ocean, baiting his hook with crabs or periwinkle and hurling the stone-weighted lures to the sea-floor hundreds of feet below. Better still were those long afternoons in the cottage kitchen when Martin and the father sat at either end of the long trough of sudsy water and tossed the handwoven wool back and forth in the water with their feet to shrink and thicken the bawneen that she would later weave into more bulky sweaters with the family double zigzag pattern. These were indeed rare and ineffably perfect moments in her long life of loneliness and fear.

For awhile the son seemed contented with this life. An occasional trip to Galway for medicine and supplies for his parents seemed to satisfy a rising wanderlust. Then, before long, there were trips all the way to Dublin where he would stay a week and sometimes two. After Dublin, there wasn't a girl on the island quite right for young Martin. Nor was there anything too good for his parents. But the presents he brought them from the mainland were nothing to the indescribable sense of relief and security that returned to them when

he, himself, came home. Then, the inevitable happened. One day the old woman with the knot of unruly white hair and the old man with the elfin face stood on the dock at Kilronnan and waved goodbye to the last joy and hope in their lives.

"I'll be coming back with money and big presents and we'll put the finest tin roof over our heads of any house on Inishmore," he had said. Three months later came a marriage announcement in a pink, scalloped envelope, with a New York address written in strange slanted script. That was four years ago, and the pride of Inishmore had not been seen or heard from since.

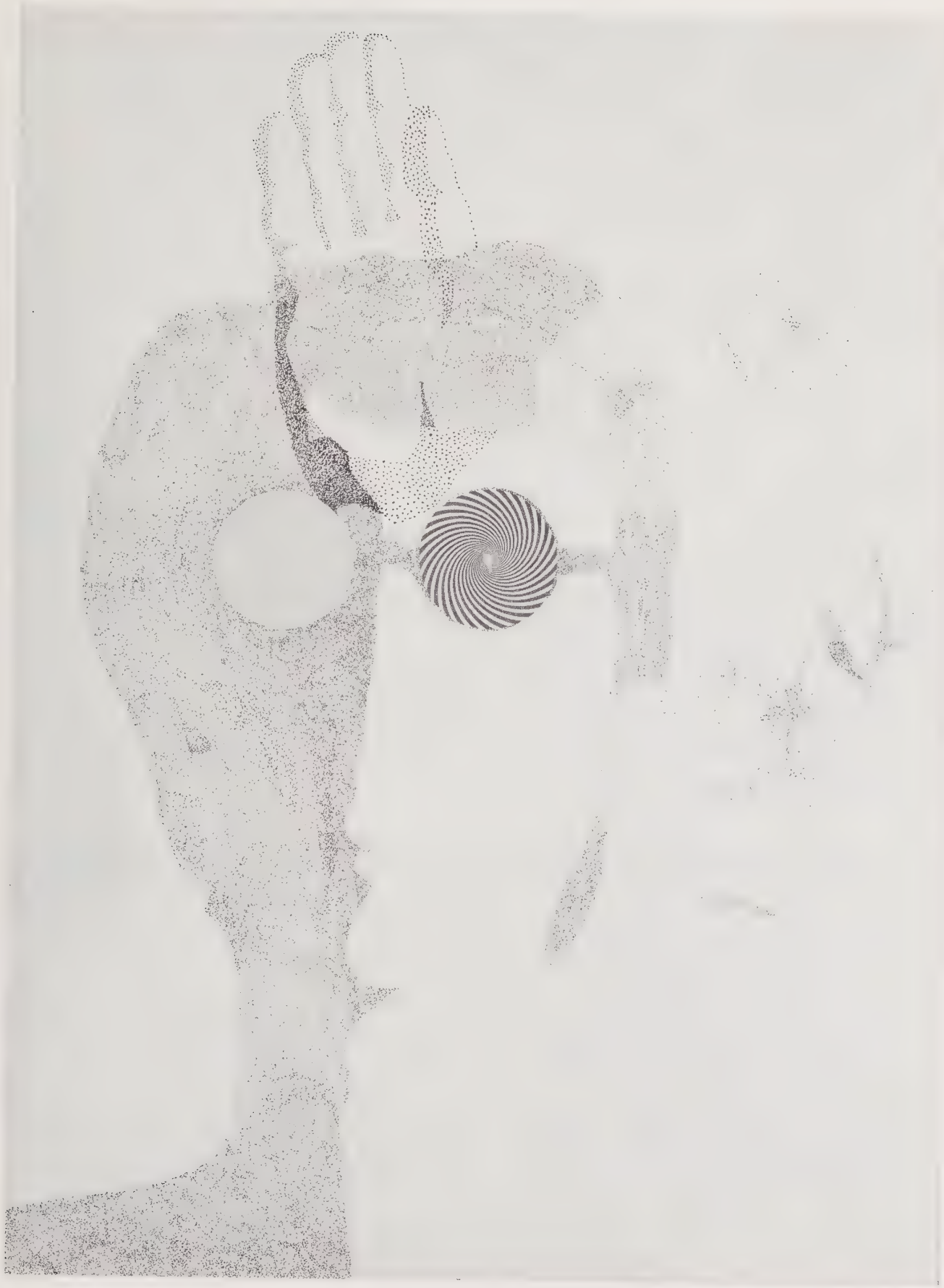
On this last evening on the Arans the full fury of the summer storm finally broke, drowning out the voice of the teller of tales and sending the guests home earlier than usual. When old Shevaun had seen the last islander out the second door, she stood in the rain for a moment at the threshold and looked toward the lightning-crossed sea. "Tomorrow ye'll be out there," she said, "and then I'll have lost the last of my children." As she moved about the primitive kitchen stirring the fire for the night, my mind went back a few weeks wind and the sea—only of sirens and traffic and playgrounds. Instead of a hearth, a chipped enamel gas stove. Instead of a pantry, a small dirt-encrusted ice box. Instead of soft warm hands, cold, nervous ones. There was no soft Gaelic voice —only a hoarse, strained one with a story to tell and seal in another pink, scalloped envelope—a story not of heroes or mermaids, but one of hate, greed, crime, death.

On this, my last evening, it was more than just a clanging buoy, a stray gull in the thatch, or the restless wind that had kept me awake. But now the sun was rising high over Connemara, and in the next room the little old woman with the knot of unruly white hair was again stirring the turf fire in the hearth. In less than an hour I would be on the steamer sailing out of their lives forever. I had no choice. I reached in the drawer, took out the pink, scalloped envelope, and walked to the door.

Composite

Sitting here . . .
Your neon rainhat
(I wish I could see the way you drew those black
lines on your eyes.)
forces its color into a chrome metaphor.
Tentacles of silence lace your mouth
shut.
Rain rivulets echoing aborted laughter
pool anonymously at our feet.
(I wish I had known you before my approach,
when you and your storm were just beginning
to find each other.)

BECKY BECK
SALLY STITES
URSULA ALEXANDER
ELIZABETH EARLE



5 Poems by Rheta Lanehart

Sancho's Oath

A loyal friend is what I'll be,
A warrior in battle's wake;
O, Knight of Truth, I bow to thee.

(Although you think my interest seems
only for the Island's sake)
A loyal friend is what I'll be.

It doesn't matter that you see
a barber's basin and call it fake.
O, Knight of Truth, I bow to thee.

And if you want to fight the sheep
and rip the windmills with your blade,
A loyal friend is what I'll be.

The world will bless your noble deeds
And as your squire much praise I'll take.
O, Knight of Truth, I bow to thee.

Forever, mi dueño, please believe
that what I vow is no mistake;
A loyal friend is what I'll be.
O, Knight of Truth, I bow to thee.

Rocinante

Caballo mío; El don
de los corceles; campeón en
las justas; amigo bién;
¡Llevadme adelante con

la fuerza del tempestad
estampido sobre el suelo
como un garañon de hielo
por mundo de la maldad!

Sufre conmigo el desdén
derrengando. Al bribón
mofando, damos pardón.
¡Oh, valeroso galán

cabalga a los vastos cielos!
Tu gloria y mis bondades
vivirán por las edades.
Al fín quedarémos fieles.

Soy Lista

Come quickly,
my stalking
king,
with claws
honed
and your saber
teeth.
Come softly
on
padded feet
to my
not-so-secret
lair
and sense the
irresistible
lure
hidden there.
You will find,
stretched
out in
shroud
of earth
on dusty
pyre,
the sacrifice
waiting
with patience of old
for the
fire.

Clavileno

O, valiant knight, come hear my plea!
A frightful thing has come to be
since Malambruno bearded my
resplendent ladies in the high
and noble service of the queen.

In that you are foresworn to free
all damsels who ask help of thee,
to my request you must comply,
O, valiant knight.

To Candaya you now will flee
and bring the giant to his knee.
Astride this wooden horse you'll fly
up to the stars, across the sky.
'Tis only this will set us free,
O, valiant knight.

Desengano

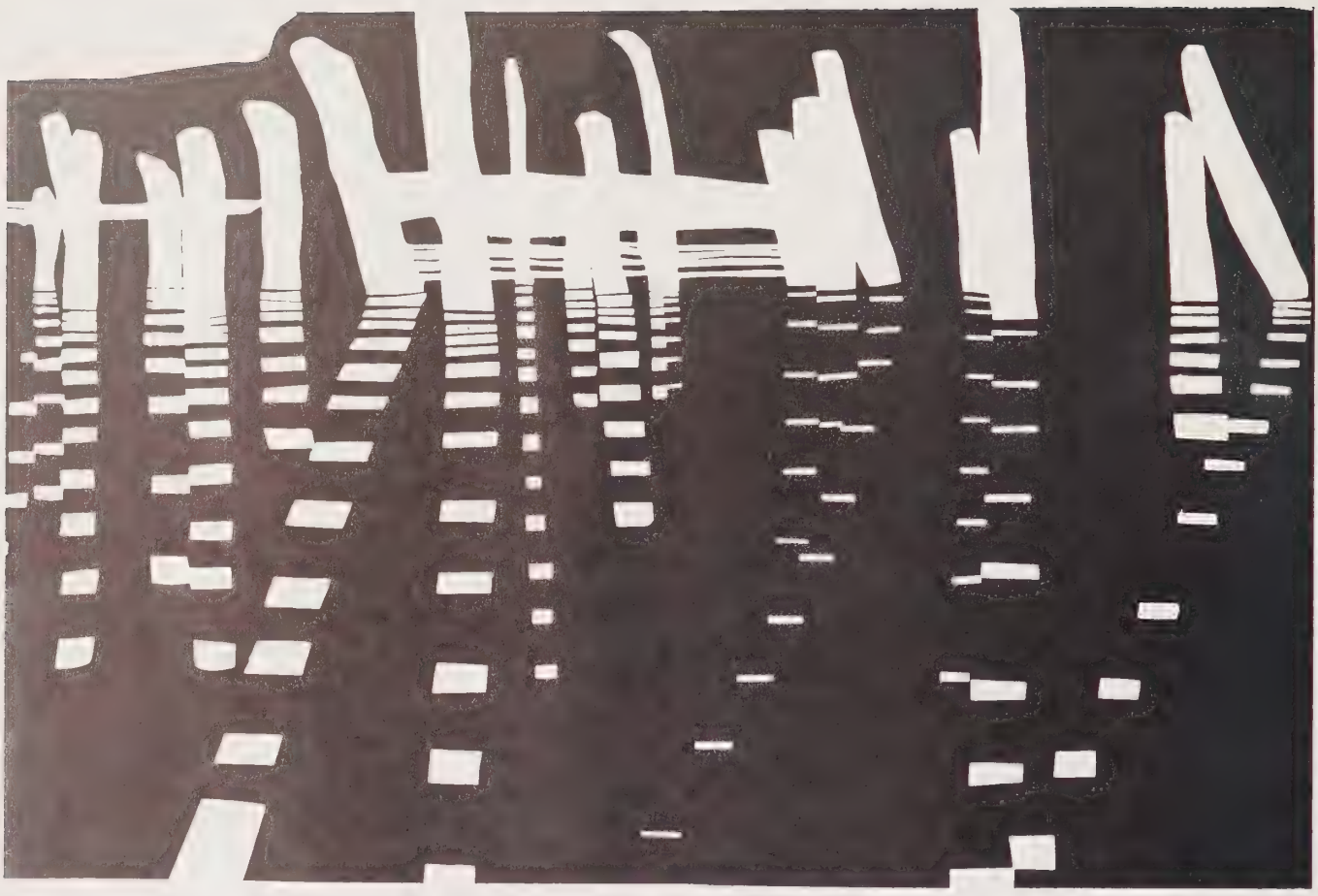
Friend Sancho, say, how is it true
that Freston went so far as this;
To mar her beauty, ah, wretched fool,
and make her seem a common miss?
How he must hate my nobleness
to bring such hopeless grief to me.
That I her brow will ne'er caress,
My life becomes a waste, you see.

Betwitched! Betwitched! Sir, it is true,
by wicked Freston's sorceress.
She could not know that it was you
upon your knees with love obsessed.
But you must not become distressed
or mope about so listlessly—
For if you run in time of stress,
Your life becomes a waste, you see.

Ah, yes, my friend, you say it true.
But how can I take up a quest
that is not worthwhile to pursue?
My disillusioned heart at best
must wait and let the pain regress.
But, sire, to disregard this plea
would only hinder your success.
Your life becomes a waste, you see.

ENVOY:

My squire, forgive my foolishness.
I bless you for your loyalty.
Without this dream, I must confess,
my life becomes a waste, you see.



A Unicorn Song

With a high and a low and a derry-down ho!
I ride on her back with a huntsman's bow.
(For the unicorn's cloud-silky mane is tossed
To the rhythm of dreams that are never lost.)

The tips of my arrows are fireflies' glow
Fashioned for spearing a harpy's toe.
My knees barely touch her blue flanks and like this
I guide her hooves gently to try to miss

The grasses that give you the devil's kiss.

Tomorrow, etc.

We all live shadow boxers' lives
And think and dream in future tense.
We love what is to come
More than what's been.

And when some dreamed of day arrives,
We usually try to prove pretense
And celebrate it some.
(By then we've got another yen.)

Ursula Alexander

Transportation

The dotted midline fades into the past,
Its dashes in the future pale to gray
And split, divide symmetrically the way.
The revolutions of the wheels forecast
Directions of the lines to be amassed
By shimmering metallic bugs that lie
Strung out in two directions, past the eye
To futures and the ever dimmer past.

My shimmering black hood precedes a flight
From faces too square-angled for emotions,
From grounded scrawny birds that haven't tried
Because of self-made wounds. I try to fight
The memories of my past, cast off devotions.
The attempt is on my face, I fear, belied.

Cape Song

And it was twoness
and a never ending stream
of days and nights blending,
and sweat-hot noons
with steamers and beer cluttering
glare-white tables,
dunes so steep we
scrabbled up to runfall
down again, and dusks
which breathed September chill
though it was still July.
The stench of docks
and tourists soaked the town
where there were foot-long hot dogs
and captain's wheels and giggling
men in twos, and we bought
sports-fat Boston papers.
Our summer was raspberry
turnovers and long slow drinks
when everyone went home, until
that last long day of pigeons
on the Common and breakfast at dawn,
deserted streets and airplanes. (the sand
in everything we touched and ate—at home
I was to find in my suitcase.)

Culture's Birth

Bacchantes weep tears of bitter rain
Bending, drowning wheat and grain.
Dark, wintry abyss of screaming silence
Belches, spews the decay
Corrupting.

In the swarthing, endless sea of night
Rise monstrous golden eyes of light,
Piercing, marking, penetrating rays—
Finite pinpoints to the tidal unknown
Forbidding.

Fears awaken and hold back
Union of the white and black.
Chaos echoes the fulfilling gulf
Sacrificing the eyes of old to new
Hoping.

The Crossing

A shoeless, dressless, headless day
It came to be as together
(On the beach clearly
Dotted with rain-pelted design)
We reached the depth and stretch
Of what's to be crossed in daylight.
It was as if our new found sight
Reached to squinting heights, even above
Those gulls (not knowing they mocked us needlessly).
Salt-aired fancy vapored our
Sand-flipping walk, crystallizing that time
Until another time, when the
Fresh drops would again distill our mist.
That was the fearless, selfless day
That we shared—and you
Seven thousand miles away.

Sally Stites

You

To know what you are,
When you come to be,
Equals impossibility.

Irony

Solidly bold, black words indent my mind
Now and then.
They're placed straight on the line
With marginal differences
At either end.
Eyes set them all into motion,
Like dominoes: one leads to another.
But, it's left to the mind
To build them right.
I guess that's why
Transfigured they must be, when I remember
Now and then.

Leslie Anne Davis

Brandywine Hundred—Chester County

Winter arrives
its flesh pulled taut across the skull of the land
from ear to ear
exposing the bone structure of the hills.

I hear small figures
walk the shoulder blades to the river.
Frozen boys, numb and squinting,
bend now to lace and then to steal the puck.

At dawn the larger figures rise.
In barns that smell of morning,
blowing woolen knuckles, they curse their luck
(their lives) with voices of disgust and scorning.

Winter arrives
rough around the edges,
its bony elbows crooked to pull us
into a shuddering embrace.

We'll climb on February's face
hoping for the wine of Spring,
still stored in March's guts, in kegs.
But, until fullblown May,
the taste remains
of Winter's now-fermenting dregs.

You, Lesley

I'd forgotten how you hate the beach
until today.
I picked dune grass by myself and thought,
half smiling,
how you cursed the sand beneath your nails,
and swore at fog that curled your hair.

Sea air was made for that;
I tried to teach you one way or another,
but your sense of humor smothered
underneath the damp, limp days.

Summer hung on us,
asthmatic months indifferent to the season
turned you to a cloud watcher.

We had every reason
to hoard the sun (like baseball cards)
the few times that it broke the haze.
We took the days
and used them jetty-walking out and back.

I'm sorry I couldn't make you love it
by September.
(You tolerated it for me) It doesn't matter,
the sea, which long ago had filled your tracks,
does not care,
and won't remember.

The Spent Dionysian Speaks To His Apollonian Friend Who Answers

Dionysian: Had you helped me then;
Had I known . . .
I would not have been
what you said I am
(back then) right now.

Apollonian: And yet, I want to call you back;
I want to make amends
for harshly breaking
the news that you were gone. How less
a pain could I have caused
when all I did was come within
your sight? Ah, god, your sight.
Small wonder it
was that filled your eyes when,
at first, you saw my shadow. Here,
amoral innocence that I have
closed forever.
I know that I destroyed
you, I know.
To remember how you screamed "Go back!
I want no more of you!" when I was
holding out my hand is like the pain (I felt) I saw
shudder through your helpless eyes while
they were disappearing.

Dionysian: But had you helped me then;
Had I known!
I would not have been
what you said I am
(back then) right now.

Apollonian: Yes, I know—until I leave again.

RHETA LANEHART

Davy Jones' Locker

by Paxon McLean

Bogue Sound is never so clear in summer as it is in the cold winter months. On a calm day, it lies in its bed and barely breathes, swelling gently and smoothly. The bottom slides under a boat, you'd swear not six inches away. The water is light jade, and when the sun shines through the surface ripples, it inlays the sand and eelgrass below with veins of gold. A man could be happy there, at peace with himself, until the shark came. Strange that no one ever saw it but me. I'd fished the same stretch of sound for fifteen years, and I'd never seen even a sand shark. Those were the good years. I'd get up and fix a big mess o' eggs and bacon—never been married—and boil coffee strong enough to stand an anchor in. Then I'd head down to the dock just about sun-up. Usually the other boats, the big ones I mean, with paid crews, had already left, but I'd just gather up my nets from the racks on shore where they'd been drying, fold them into the stern, and take my time out through the channels. She wasn't a big boat—twenty feet—with a high narrow flaring prow, and a low, rounded stern. I'd planked over the last seven or eight feet, almost flush with the gunwale, and I'd put my net on it—dry before I set it, tangy with seaweed and brine when it came back in. I didn't hail from these parts, you know, like you. They called me the Flatlander. I was born out west, but the sand here's different. No dust. My Pa used to say you could throw seeds up in the air, and they'd sprout the next day. Kansas. Guess I still have the twang. Well, anyway, I'd mosey on down the sound about a mile this side of the intercoastal, and I'd usually come up with fair catches. Fishin' ain't like farmin'. They're two different kinds o' sweat. Farmin' you plow, and plant, and disk the weeds, and pray for rain so the crops don't wither dead away. Your skin creases like bad-cured rawhide, and your eyes get squinty from looking up for clouds. You break your back for months keepin' the plants growin' and healthy, but you can only harvest a crop once. Then you gotta stretch the money you make for another year. Usually, you pay up all your bills, lay out a little for fixin' up, and you're back on credit until next harvest. Lord, here it's like harvest time every day! You don't plant anything—all you do is take what you can grab up out o' the sea. After fishin' for a livin', I just can't see going back to farmin'. I never got rich, mind you, but I made fair money selling my catches to the big boats. They take and sell their fish to the restaurants hereabouts, and ship tons of fish, and crabs, and shrimp and such to be canned and frozen. Why, some o' those boys make as much as a small oilman. Oil. That's one thing I never cared for too much. For me to make a livin' digging holes in the ground, lookin' for that dirty stuff somehow didn't grab me as the thing I wanted to do. Lord, here I am ramblin' again. It's just that whenever I see a stranger, I gotta talk to him, and I always wind up bending his ear till it droops like dry corn. Where was I? Oh yeah. I was going to tell you about coming here from Kansas. There were only two of us kids—my brother, Pete, and me. Ma died when I was twelve and Pete was fifteen. Pa never got over it. After we quit work for the day, he used to drag her old rocker out on the back porch and watch the sunset. Made us feel right funny to see him do it. It was like he was wasting away. Well, we sorta made do the best we could for the next four years, till one day Pete up and enlisted in the Army. Didn't even tell us when he did it, but one night at supper he said he was supposed to "report" the next day. So we all rode into town to the bus station in the morning, and Pa and I stood around until the bus pulled out. It was a month later we got a call from the

army. With just the two of us at the farm, and all the work, Pa and I ate a lot out of cans. Well, we were having lunch, and I'd opened up these peaches for dessert. After he told me what the captain said, the tin can taste of those peaches kept coming back into my mouth, and I never **could** forget it. The captain was real polite, Pa said . . . he tried to tell him as nice as he could that Pete had stepped on a mine during his basic training, and was blown up all over Texas. That kinda took the rest of the starch out of Pa. I'd see him staring at me sometimes like he expected me to fall over right in front of him. They brought Pete home, and gave him a full military funeral. The coffin was sealed. I kept tasting those tin can peaches.

Pa and I stayed on and tried to run the farm by ourselves a while longer, but finally he told me it was no use—he just didn't have the heart for it any more. So he sold the farm, livestock and all, to our nearest neighbor, Lucas Blade. Lucas'd had his eye on our sweetwater creek for a coupl'a years anyway, so we got a good price. Pa took the cash, and we packed our clothes to head for California. He didn't want to take anything else, except his pictures of Ma and Pete. The night before we were supposed to leave, Pa died in his sleep. I went in his room the next morning to wake him up for breakfast; the station wagon was packed and ready to go. He was lying there smiling, and I didn't know he wasn't just asleep until I touched his shoulder. I called the Doc, and when he came he said Pa must've died of a broken heart. I stayed long enough to see him resting in the family plot on the hill beside Ma and Pete. Then I put his old suitcase on the bedroom floor and headed east. I had enough money to last me till I could get a steady job and settle down, and I was young, and strong, so I wasn't too worried. I used to wonder why God did things the way He did, but I figured that wasn't really any of my business. I worked my way east, through Missouri, down across Tennessee, swung up through Kentucky and Virginia, and back down into North Carolina. That's when I decided I wanted to see the Atlantic Ocean. Lord, I'd never even seen a good-sized mud puddle before I left Kansas, and I sure looked forward to my first glimpse. I didn't rush in to it, though. I was working up in the northeast tip of the state, and there aren't a whole lot of people up there. It's right funny—in the top half, there's a little chain of islands that curve around the coast, name of Outer Banks, and they're pretty useful, all right. They sit out there and keep the ocean from pounding away at the mainland. So I struck out for the coast. Before, I'd gotten odd jobs where I could—things like washing dishes, or cooking in some little café, or pumping gas. I found out pretty fast that if I stayed very long, I'd have to learn about fishing. There was this old fisherman who saw me hanging around the docks, and asked if I wanted a job scrubbing down his boat after the day's fishing. I told him yes, and he handed me a bucket and a stiff-bristled push broom. Well, I worked for him for about a week, but I wasn't making enough money to stay. I'd found a room in a little motel—they gave me a good deal because it was off-season. My food didn't cost much in the little café near the docks, either, but everything added up to more than I was making, and I didn't want to dip into my nest egg with winter just starting. So the next afternoon when Captain Pat came back into port, I told him I was sorry, but I couldn't stay any longer. He asked me some questions about my family, and what I planned to do after I left and all. I had wondered why he hadn't asked me before, but these easterners are pretty close about their own affairs, and they don't pry into other people's. I told him about Ma, and Pete, and Pa, and coming east to make a living. Besides, I told him, I hadn't seen the ocean yet, because of those Banks, and I thought I'd head farther south for a while. He offered me a fulltime job on his boat, going out into the ocean with him, and said he'd see to it I made enough money to get by on. So I stayed. The first morning we went out was freezing cold, I thought, and pretty rough. Captain Pat just grunted and said it was a good day, and I'd be sorry to see such fair weather go before long. I wasn't much use to him at first—hanging over the stern throwing my guts up. When I got the dry heaves, he fished a cold Pepsi out of the ice chest, and that calmed my stomach down a little.

I didn't get sick after that, except now and then on a real rough day, or when the smell of fish got to me. Captain Pat meant a lot to me. My mind had refused to let me remember my family,

and the way things were before I came east. He must've known that I was building up a wall of stone inside that pretty soon nobody would be able to break down—not even me. So he'd talk to me about everyday things, and gradually I'd tell him stuff I never thought I'd mention again. I fished with him all winter. We'd trawl for mullet, and mackerel, and the nets would come up full of the strangest critters I'd ever seen. He taught me the names of everything. Big black spider crabs that looked like armored tarantulas; blowfish that puffed themselves up so full of air I could drop them on the deck and they'd bounce; long sleek barracudas with teeth so sharp one bit the end of a thick rubber hose I stuck in his mouth clean off. Cap'n Pat laughed and called me the Kansas Kid. If it'd been anybody else I wouldn't have let him do it, but he'd helped heal the ache I hadn't let myself face since Pa died. Spring started to show signs of coming, and I was glad. One beautiful day, when we were trawling pretty far out, Cap'n Pat pulled a book out of his pocket and tossed it over to me. It was a copy of Emerson's Essays. I read it through from cover to cover, and when I'd finish a part, we'd talk about it. We read all through the spring—stories, plays, poems—he had more **books!** Then about halfway through the summer, he said he probably wouldn't fish another season. He was getting old, and thought he'd just retire, sell the Emily III, and read for the rest of his life. He told me I'd do well to stay in North Carolina and fish a few years before I moved on. He had a cousin John in a little town called Sandy Cove about seventy-five miles down the coast he'd write, and tell him to look out for me until I could get myself straight. I thanked him for everything, packed the old station wagon up, and left. He was about the best friend I guess I ever had.

I headed south for Sandy Cove, and there, stranger, is where the last part of this story of mine began. I looked up his cousin John, and asked him for a job. Ole John reckoned that if Pat sent me, I'd do all right, so he took me on. Cap'n Pat'd given me some of his books, and I'd bought some more, so I usually pulled one out in slack times and read awhile. The first time I did it, John laughed and said he **knew** Pat had sent me then, because when they were growing up he hardly ever saw him without his nose stuck in a book. I asked him if it was all right, but he said he didn't mind, as long as it didn't bother my work any. I worked on John's boat, Seagull IV, for two years. At first I worried about being able to pull my own weight, but I needn't have. Cap'n Pat was a good teacher. As soon as I'd saved enough money, I moved out of the only boarding house in Sandy Cove and into a little house of my own. It wasn't a real boarding house—Mrs. Hammond's husband died in a shipwreck one winter, and she started letting rooms out for rent. She didn't fix meals, but she kept the rooms neat and clean, and didn't charge much. I wanted a place I could cook in, and drive nails in the wall if I wanted to hang a picture up. Soon after I'd gotten the house, I knew I'd have to quit working for Cap'n John, and somehow get a boat of my own. I still had most of the money from the farm, even after I'd started payments on the little house, and I wasn't spending much of my weekly salary. I took my problem to John, and he said he had a clean little twenty-footer he'd sell me for a good price, because I'd have to fix her up some. I didn't mind **that,** I said, so we shook on it. From then on I lived from day to day. My time was entirely my own. I sold my catches to Cap'n John, and cruised from year to year. I was happy, but that miserable misbegotten son of a shark ruined everything. The first day I saw it I couldn't believe my eyes. I looked up from my book, **Plato,** I think it was, and saw a huge dorsal fin bearing right for my bow. I jumped up and spun the wheel hard to starboard and the shark submerged quietly and slid right under the boat. **God,** it was big! It circled and came back, gliding easily right beside me. I swear it was bigger than the boat! I'd seen sharks before, big ones, too, but that was when I fished out in the ocean with Cap'n Pat and Cap'n John. This was a real monster, and I couldn't figure out what he was doing in the sound. That first day he didn't do anything, just lazed beside the boat for a full ten minutes, his escort of black and white pilot fish darting everywhere. I told John about it when I took him my catch late that afternoon, and he didn't know what to make of it, either. The next day, I was just about at the same place when he came back. This time he sliced through the water straight for my net. I yelled and started pulling in. He hit it hard, biting through inch-thick rope

like butter, slashing the fish to ribbons, gorging on **my** catch! By the time I got the net in, it was ruined, and not a single fish was in it. I headed straight for the dock, and the men gathered around when they saw the mess he'd made of my gear. It took me two full days to repair that net, and then I headed out the third morning, thinking he'd have gone on back out to open sea by then. None of the other boats' crews had caught as much as a glimpse of him. Well, he hadn't left, and when he finished playing with my net **that** time, I knew I'd have to buy a new one. I found one I could use, and bought it from Cap'n John's sister's husband. Cap'n John lent me his old forty-five service revolver. It was on a Wednesday morning when I saw that shark for the last time. I meant to kill him, and I kept the forty-five handy. Well, he surfaced right in front of me, and headed close to the boat, straight for my net. I stood up and fired the whole clip at him, point-blank, aiming with both hands. The havoc I'd seen him work on the nets was **nothing** to what he did then. He arched and spun and thrashed around so I could hardly stand up. Then before I knew what he was doing, he rammed the boat head on, and I was thrown out. He came at me then, with that bloody mouth wide open, fast as a stampeding herd of cows. I didn't have time to do anything.

Tell me, stranger, how did **you** die?

Popcorn

I wish we had some popcorn right now.
Something to pop into our mouths and crunch.
Something to remove our minds from the credibility
    gap or the Republican National Convention or
    Benjamin's near-fatal liaison with Mrs. Robinson.
Popcorn's good for the soul.
It has status, baby.
Keep the faith with popcorn.

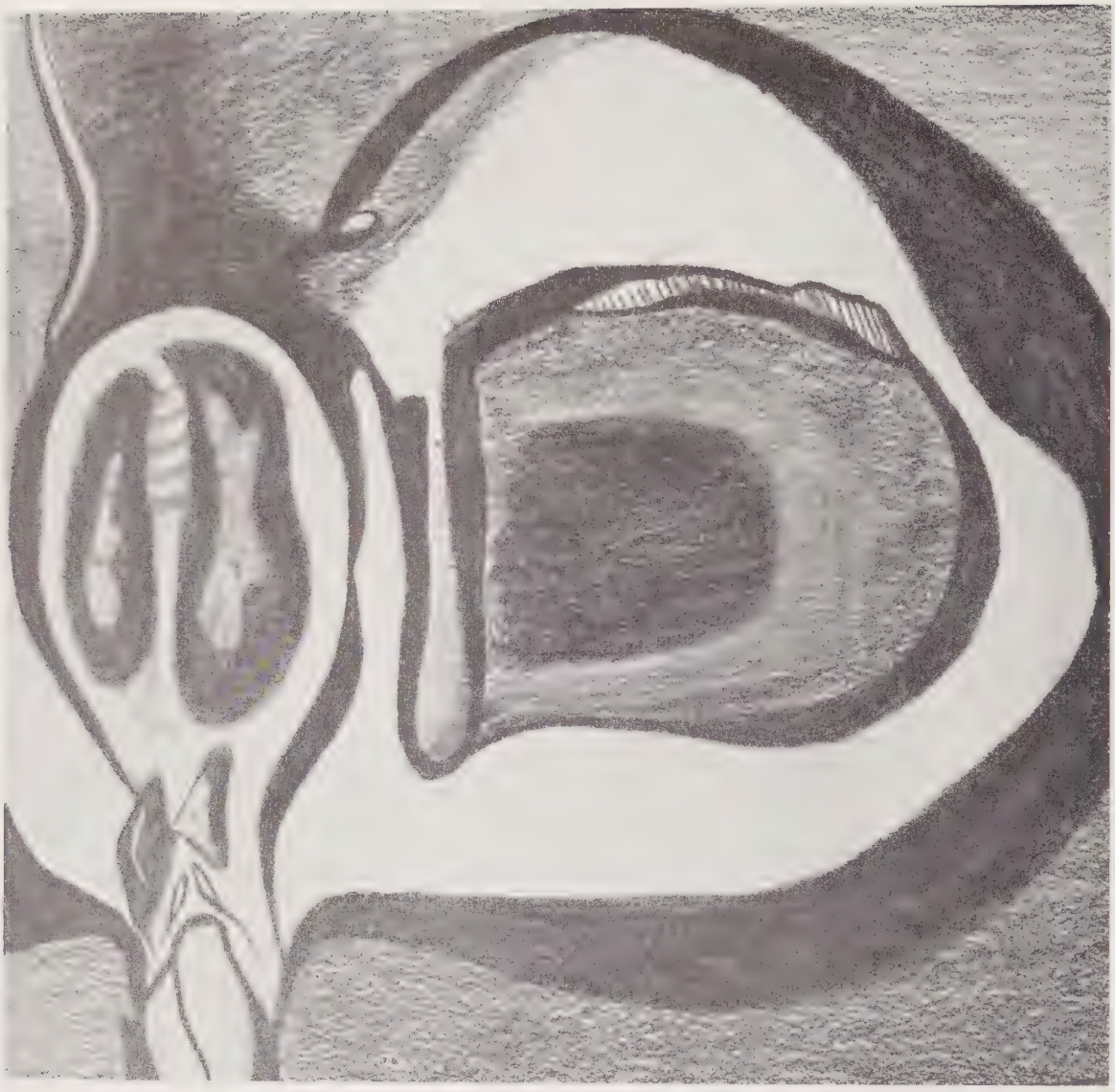
Sure, popcorn's all white.
But you can dye it any color of the rainbow.
All you need is a 49¢ set of vegetable coloring.
Good ol' All-American popcorn.

Sell it at the ballpark. Only a dime for a
greasy, thin paper bag full. Feel the grit of
the salt as your fingers dive in and grab a
handful.

Buy a box at the theater. Crunch away as you
intently see Rosemary's struggle to save her
baby, or the reverse-evolution of the planet
of the chimps.

Good ol' All-American popcorn.
White as the driven snow;
But you can dye it any color
You want to.

SHERRY McGEACHY



Commentary on American Philosophy

God was quite surprised to see
A Christmas gift beneath his tree,
Wrapped in white and tied with blue
Courtesy—Saks Fifth Avenue.

BECKY BECK

NOTES

Maureen Horak Allan is a 1968 graduate of Queens. She majored in Russian Studies here and was a member of *Sigma Upsilon* and on the *Signet* staff. She and her husband are now living in Würzburg, Germany.

Ursula Alexander is an Art major from Charleston, South Carolina. She is a senior and is a member of *Sigma Upsilon,* honorary literary fraternity.

Becky Beck, from Annandale, Virginia, is a senior Psychology major. She is a member of *Sigma Upsilon.*

Charley Carlock is a Junior majoring in Psychology. She is a member of *Sigma Upsilon* and is from Jersey City, New Jersey.

Leslie Anne Davis, a member of *Sigma Upsilon,* is from Wilmington, Delaware. She is a senior and an Art major.

Elizabeth Earle graduated from Queens in 1968 with a major in Spanish. She belonged to *Sigma Upsilon* and worked on *Signet.* She is from Danville, Virginia, and is now studying in Spain.

Charles O. Hadley is an assistant professor of English Literature and Composition. He received degrees from Davidson College and UNC and has studied at several universities, among them the University of Besançon, Paris, and the University of Birmingham, England, at Stratford. He was elected by the Senior class of 1969 to speak at the Senior Recognition Day ceremonies. The story in this issue is taken from his speech.

Jane Hoyme, a 1967 graduate of Queens, is living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She was a member of *Sigma Upsilon* and on the *Signet* staff.

Rheta Lanehart, a senior, is from Bartow, Florida. She is majoring in Spanish and is a member of *Sigma Upsilon* literary fraternity.

Kathy Mitchell is majoring in English Literature and Composition. She is a junior from Greenville, South Carolina.

Sherry McGeachy is a freshman from Mt. Gilead, North Carolina. She is planning a major in English Literature and Composition.

Paxon McLean is President of *Sigma Upsilon* and is a senior English Literature and Composition major from Red Springs, North Carolina. She was a co-recipient of the Creative Writing Cup, 1967-68.

Linda McPhail is from Charleston, South Carolina. She is a senior majoring in English Literature and Composition.

Sally Stites is a senior from Sewickly, Pennsylvania. She is an English Literature and Composition major.

Tilda Todd graduated from Queens in 1968 with a major in English Literature and Composition. She is a past president of *Sigma Upsilon* and was on the *Signet* staff. She is now working with Educational Television in Columbia, South Carolina.

J. Daniel Zeluff is a member of the Queens College faculty. He received degrees from the University of Florida, Union Theological Seminary, and the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. He also attended the University of Tampa at Yale University.

ART NOTES

Carol Bishop is a senior Art major from Alexandria, Virginia.

Carol Callaway, from Covington, Georgia, is a senior majoring in Art. Carol built the camera which she used to take the photographs. She also developed them herself.

Nancy Jane Grady is from Alexandria, Virginia, and is a senior Art major.

Susan Merritt is from Spartanburg, a junior, and is an Art major.

John D. McClanahan is a member of the college faculty. He received degrees from Bethany College and from the University of Iowa. He has appeared in Les Editions de la Revue Moderne, Paris and Art Revue Magazine.

Cassie Shelly is a Junior History major from Souderton, Pennsylvania.

Vol. XI, No. 2

Signet is published twice during the academic calendar by the Observer Printing House, Charlotte, North Carolina. It is financed by the Student Government Association of Queens College and a grant from The North Carolina Arts Council, Raleigh. Address all correspondence to *Signet*, Queens College, Charlotte, North Carolina 28207.